



Onboard Mediterranea
February 2nd, 2015
Istanbul, Turkey

Press release no.18

Progetto Mediterranea: Outcomes of plankton mapping along the first part of the route published. The results are reassuring as no non-autochthonous or invasive species were identified. The Otranto Channel is a hot-spot of plankton biodiversity. In the Ionian sea microplastics are a cause for concern.

The analysis of samples gathered by **Progetto Mediterranea in cooperation with British researchers from SAHFOS in June 2014** along the Otranto-Monemvasia route has enabled to conduct a census on plankton species in coastal water on the Eastern Ionian and Southern Aegean seas for the first time.

“Progetto Mediterranea has enabled to monitor plankton in an area where it had never been done before – said Priscilla Licandro from SAHFOS – “There is recent data on plankton in the Ionian sea but they are scattered and obtained from sampling further from the coast while we sampled the coastal area, which is more at risk”.

Overall 89 species/genres were identified, all are typically Mediterranean and can be traced back to 24 different taxonomic groups. In particular the **Otranto Channel and the Northern Ionian sea are rich in species, they are "hot spots" of plankton biodiversity.**

Data gathered by Progetto Mediterranea showed that in the Eastern Ionian sea, as already observed in surrounding areas, animal plankton is dominated by diverse species of small shellfish and gelatinous zooplankton, which are particularly suited to oligotrophic waters, i.e. waters poor in nutrients, like the Ionian sea. These results are reassuring as those species have been identified as typically Mediterranean, and there are **no unusual or invasive species** that could threaten local plankton.

Samples taken by Progetto Mediterranea identified the **Otranto Channel, the Ionian sea and the Aegean sea as three separate "provinces"**, each with a characteristic plankton population. *"This is an important piece of information - said Licandro - a zero level which helps improve the management/protection of sea environments and is fundamental for future forecasts".*

Progetto Mediterranea has contributed to localize areas of reproduction of fish species (off the islands of Othoni and Lefkada and the sea of Kallithea, Methoni and off the island of Elafonisos) and microplastics polluted areas (in the sea surrounding the island of Zante and off Methoni and the island of Elafonisos), which should be considered to potential reclamation and improvement in the management of the environmental impact.

Progetto Mediterranea is an Italian cultural and scientific expedition, completely self-sustained. It is raising now funds to support over the next five years SAHFOS research on plankton and its distribution throughout the Mediterranean sea. Information on how to promote and support the project “Plankton mapping and biodiversity in the Mediterranean sea” can be obtained by writing to info@progettomediterranea.com



Progetto Mediterranea
e-mail: info@progettomediterranea.com
www.progettomediterranea.com

Sponsor

Precision
FLUID CONTROLS